



# Afghanistan without Poverty

## A Plain Language Guide to Poverty in Afghanistan



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## Plain Language Guide Overview:

This is a plain language guide to poverty, the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the Afghanistan Pilot Participatory Poverty Assessment (APPPA). The Agency Coordinating Body of Afghan Relief (ACBAR) has produced this booklet to increase people's understanding of poverty and development initiatives in Afghanistan.

This guide aims to describe poverty; how it's caused and how to reduce it. The idea is to explain the related ideas of poverty reduction and development in an accessible and understandable way.

This booklet is a plain language guide, which means it has been written in a simple, reader-friendly language that is accessible to everyone. It is based upon the format and cartoons used in the Zanzibar Plain Language Guide: Zanzibar without Poverty (March 2002), which was kindly made available to us by the Zanzibar Poverty Reduction Plan Popularisation Task Force (ZPRP-PTF). The Afghanistan without Poverty booklet has been written so that more people can know about, understand, discuss and use the important information contained in the ANDS, APPPA and the debates around reducing poverty. When more people are able to understand this information it may increase the level of meaningful participation in the Government's poverty reduction efforts, particularly in relation to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

It is hoped that by increasing participation in and understanding of the ANDS, there will be greater commitment by more Afghans to the poverty reduction process and thus help to build ownership of the national development strategy and related poverty reduction process. This information will also help stakeholders at all levels – including communities, civil society, private sector and Government – to improve poverty reduction policies and practices.

## Table of Content:

Plain Language Guide Overview.....	1
Contents Page.....	1
What does the Guide talk about?.....	2
Glossary.....	3
<b>Section 1:</b>	
Section 1.1 – What is Poverty?.....	5
Section 1.2 – What is Poverty in Afghanistan?.....	9
Section 1.3 – How can poverty be reduced?.....	13
Section 1.4 – Who is involved in Development and Poverty Reduction?.....	18
<b>Section 2:</b>	
Section 2.1 - What is a PRSP and who is involved?.....	22
Section 2.2 – What is the Afghan PRSP/ANDS?.....	30
Section 2.3 – What is the APPPA?.....	39
Section 3.1 - Looking to the Future.....	44

# what does this guide talk about?

## Section 1:

### Section 1.1: What is Poverty?

To reduce poverty, people need to know what it is. This section explores the different types of poverty and what people need to not live in poverty.

### Section 1.2: What is Poverty in Afghanistan?

To understand poverty and poverty reduction strategies in Afghanistan, we first need to know about poverty in Afghanistan. This section gives us a summary of poverty information showing what poverty is like in Afghanistan.

### Section 1.3: How can poverty be reduced?

This section talks about the ways the number of people living in poverty can be reduced by pro-poor economic growth.

### Section 1.4: Who is involved in Development and Poverty Reduction?

This section looks at the three main groups who are involved in poverty reduction and development. It introduces public, private and civil society organisations (CSOs).

## Section 2:

### Section 2.1: What is a PRSP and who is involved?

This section explains the process by which the Government, international community and CSOs are going to reduce poverty and what part each group will play.

### Section 2.2: What is the Afghan PRSP/ANDS?

This section looks in detail at what the Government plan to do to reduce poverty and how they hope to achieve it.

### Section 2.3: What is the APPPA?

This section looks at what the APPPA is, what it did and how this may have added to the quality of the ANDS and to wider understanding of poverty and poverty reduction.

# Glossary

**Afghanistan Compact** – An agreement between the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations and the International Community which coordinates Afghan and International efforts for five years starting in 2006

**Assets** – an item of value which can be exchanged, such as money, property, animals, tools

**Average Life Expectancy** – this is the average amount of time (in years) that people of a certain country can expect to live. It is often shown for both men and women as there is usually a difference

**Benchmarks** – these are development targets for the central Government and line ministries which are set out for the ANDS

**Civil Society** – this is voluntary civic and social organisations that are the basis of a functioning society. These types of organisations are different from Government-supported structures

**Development** – can mean many things but in terms of Afghanistan's development, this is about growth in political, economic and social aspects of the country

**Free Market** – This is a market system in which the forces of demand and supply set the prices and allocate available supplies to customers without help from the Government

**Free Trade** – This is when there are no Government imposed barriers to trade between two countries

**Food Security** – This is when an individual, family or community are able to eat enough good food to be able to live a healthy normal life

**Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** – this is the total value of goods and services produced within a country in a given amount of time

**Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC)** – these are a number of countries which are greatly in debt, where human poverty is at its highest levels in all forms. Normally, HIPCs have low levels of formal employment, low food intake, ill-health, low levels of education and poor access to it and weak health standards, particularly for women and children

**International Monetary Fund (IMF)** – is an organisation with 184 member states. Its main job is to lend money to member countries to fund policies surrounding finance, such as expanding international trade or international monetary cooperation between nations

**Medium Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF)** – this is included in the ANDS and explains where the Government will get its money from and how it plans to spend it

**Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** – these are 8 development goals that all 191 members of the United Nations have agreed to achieve by the year 2020 (1400). The goals are centred on halving poverty between 1990 and 2015

**Participation** – this is a process whereby people can join in and add to the decisions that affect their lives

**Poverty** – this is defined by the World Bank as when people have to live on less than \$1 per day.

**Poverty Reduction** – this is a process which tries to lower the amount of people who are living in poverty by improving access to services which would improve the quality of their lives, such as education and healthcare, or, by improving their access to ways in which they can make money, either through employment or small businesses

**Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF)** - After 12 months of successful work under a PRSP a developing country can qualify for low interest loans from the IMF under this facility.

**Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)** – In order to qualify for loans from the World Bank and IMF under the HIPC initiative and PRGF, the Government of Afghanistan must prepare a PRSP outlining the approach it will take to reduce poverty throughout the country. The Government of Afghanistan must then adapt its economic policies in order to get the loans. In Afghanistan, the ANDS will serve as the PRSP

**Private Sector** – this is the part of the economy which does not include Government-controlled offices. The private sector is made up of businesses and commercial organisations which are independent from Government control and are for profit.

**Privatisation** – this is when Government-owned

resources such as manufacturing industries, national parks and other state-owned businesses get transferred to private ownership and management

**Pro-poor Growth** – this is economic growth which is deemed beneficial for the poor. Normal growth is about increases in GDP and other indicators such as exports, but this does not always mean that the growth is fair or benefiting the most poor. Pro-poor growth focuses on ensuring that it is those who are the poorest who get access to growth profits

**Public Sector** – this is all of Government undertakings within a country. In Afghanistan, this includes the central Government ministries and agencies as well as provincial, regional and local/municipal Government units. Public corporations that are subject to Government controls are also public sector

**Well-being** – when talking about poverty and poverty reduction well-being is often mentioned. It means that people are able to live to a good standard of living and have access to the services they need in order to be happy, healthy and involved in the development of their families, communities and country

**World Bank** – this institution provides financial assistance for development. It focuses on providing loans and technical help towards restructuring developing country economies.



# 1.1 what is poverty?



Poverty reduction, economic growth and increased security are the main aims of the Afghan Government. But what do we mean when we talk about poverty? If the Government aims to reduce it, we must first know what it means in all of its forms.

## What is Poverty?

Poverty is when people do not have a good standard of living. A poor standard of living may include not having access to clean drinking water, a house that is in a bad condition or, not being able to make enough money. Poverty may also mean that people are in poor health and cannot afford to see a doctor or buy medicine.

Poverty is not just about material things – it can also be about how people feel. People living in poverty may have no access to people or places that care for them or offer them support. People living in poverty may feel vulnerable and scared and feel that they have no means of protection either from the people they live with or from wider society, such as Government officials.

What does Vulnerable mean?

Different people can be vulnerable to different things. For example, people who are poor are less likely to have enough food to eat. This makes them more likely to suffer from, or be vulnerable to, health problems. Some groups of people are seen as more vulnerable than others. Very old people, young children, single mothers, female-headed households, disabled and people from smaller ethnic groups are often seen as groups which are most likely to be vulnerable.

### What is Protection?

Protection is needed for people to feel safe in their lives. People living in poverty are often vulnerable and have no way to protect themselves against the people, places or situations that cause them harm. Protection can come from social networks such as family or friends, or from institutions such as Governments, non-Governmental organisations (NGOs) or civil society organisations (CSOs).

Different people think about poverty in different ways. Some people think poverty is about being able to buy and sell things while other people think it's about getting access to a fair share of education and health care, about being given respect or having some influence over what happens in their life. Because of these differences, it is useful to think about two main types of poverty: income poverty and non-income poverty. Income Poverty occurs when a household does not have enough money. The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than \$1 US per day. Definitions of poverty can change but usually it is when people do not have enough money to lead a healthy life. Poverty means that people will not have enough money to buy food or medicine; they will have poor clothing and houses that are unsafe or that offer no protection from the weather.

Income poverty means people do not have enough access to money or other assets. Land is an asset and without this, people are unable to grow food and keep animals. This means that they have no food for themselves and nothing left over to sell.

The best way to reduce income poverty is to encourage and support the development of effective businesses which make good use of natural resources and talents to create wealth and jobs.

Non-Income Poverty occurs when people may have a little bit of money but otherwise the quality of their life is not good. Poverty is not always about money. People may have a little money but, not have access to affordable social and physical services (education, healthcare, medicines, water, sanitation, transport). They may feel unsafe because of violence or oppression or because they cannot trust the authorities.

The best way to reduce non-income poverty is to make sure that people have access to affordable and good quality social services and infrastructure, that they feel secure in their homes and trust the authorities, and if they are vulnerable, that there are projects and programmes that give special attention to them.

Poverty is about more than whether or not someone has enough money in their pocket. What do people say they need in order to have a good life?

People need Material Well-being. This means people need to have enough food, clean water, tools to make a living and to provide for their families.

Physical Well-being is also important. People want to feel free from disease, fit, healthy and with energy to work and support their families and communities.

People need Social Well-being. This means people want to live in a secure house and in a safe community with friends and family who care for them.

Security is also very important. People want to feel physically safe and have a sense of confidence about the future.

In order to have a good life, people need Freedom of Choice and Action – people want to have a good education, work skills and an ability to be able to participate in decisions that affect their lives. They want to be free in what they choose to do in their social, cultural and political lives, without facing restrictions from Government or anyone else.





What do people need to be able to get out of poverty?

Economic Capabilities – people need to be able to make a living so that they can earn money, eat food, buy the things they need and join in with social life.

Human Capabilities – people need healthcare, education, nutrition, clean water and shelter. Without these people cannot work and this is a barrier to both economic development and poverty reduction.

Political Capabilities – people need human rights and an ability to exercise influence over public policies which affect their lives. Lack of basic political freedom is a major aspect of poverty – without a voice people cannot participate in political change.

### Is Poverty different for men and women?

Poverty is experienced differently by men and women. It is usually more severe for women. On average women:

- eat less food in the household
- have less access to public services
- are more likely to be illiterate and as a result less likely to find employment
- are more likely to be socially and politically excluded in their communities

Therefore, women's abilities to overcome poverty are generally more difficult and different from men's.

### Summary: What is Poverty?

- Poverty is not just about money
- Poverty is 'multidimensional': it is about access to food, medicine, and education and about feeling secure and free to participate in decision making.
- Poverty affects different people in different ways. Some people are more able to deal with the causes of poverty than other people. Groups who find it difficult to deal with poverty are people like the elderly, the young and women.

# 1.2 what is poverty in afghanistan?

Poverty can include many different things. What follows is a brief overview of the different types of poverty in Afghanistan.

## Poverty Profile:

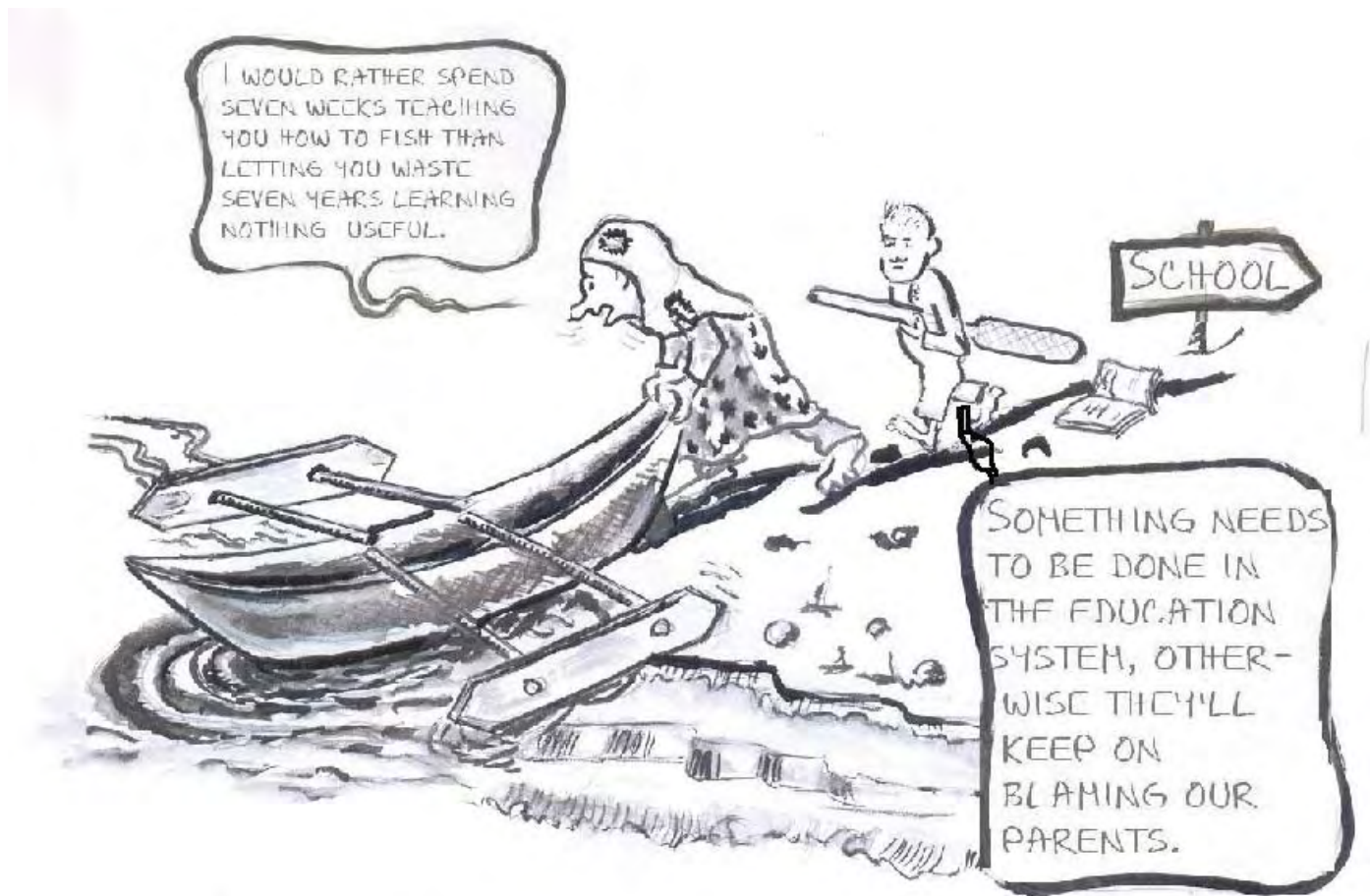
Population	32 million
Life Expectancy	43 years
Population living below poverty line	53%
Unemployment rate	40%
% of people who can read and write	28%
Number of children born per woman	6.6
Births attended by a skilled person	12%
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	136,000

Source: ReliefWeb, Country Profiles: Afghanistan

The graphs below show some of the poverty indicators in more detail. This information was taken from the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) 2005.

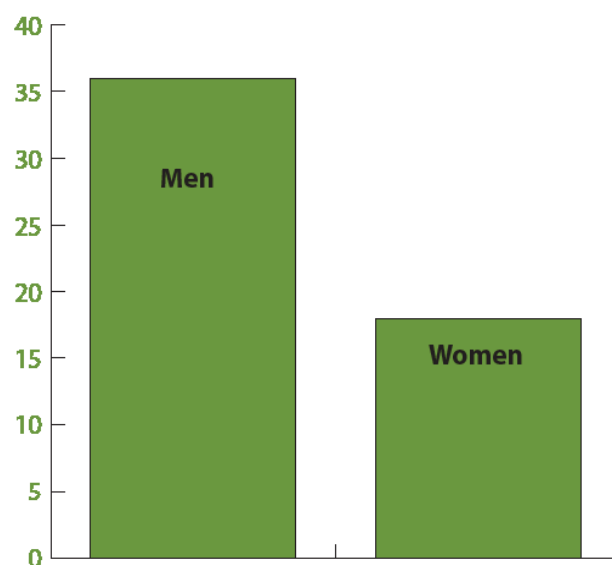
## What is the NRVA?

Between June and August 2005, just over 30,000 households were asked to answer questions about their lives. The result was a document that was published in 2007. The NRVA talks about facts and figures relating to poverty. The whole process was only the second time that information had been collected on a national scale. The information was collected so that it could be used to guide and update decisions that are to be made about Afghanistan's development.



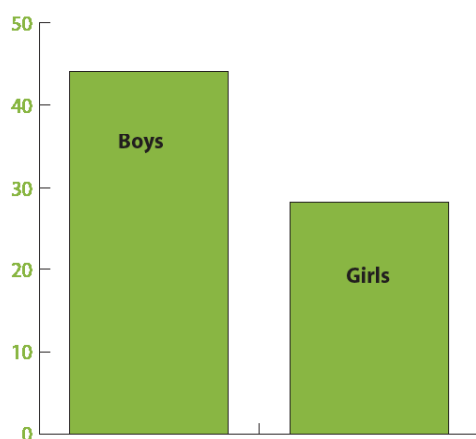
### Literacy Rates

In Afghanistan, there is a very low average literacy rate with just 28% of the population able to read and write. Looking at the graph below, we can see that the literacy rate for women is very low.



## School Attendance

Looking at the number of children aged 6-13 years who are enrolled and attending primary school, the NRVA 2005 estimates that the national average for attendance is 37% overall. Looking at the graph we can see that fewer girls are enrolled than boys. Children often work instead of attending school and this will impact on their education and future development. If children do not get an education, they will not get good jobs and will not be able to add to the economic growth or social wealth of the country.



## Reproductive Health

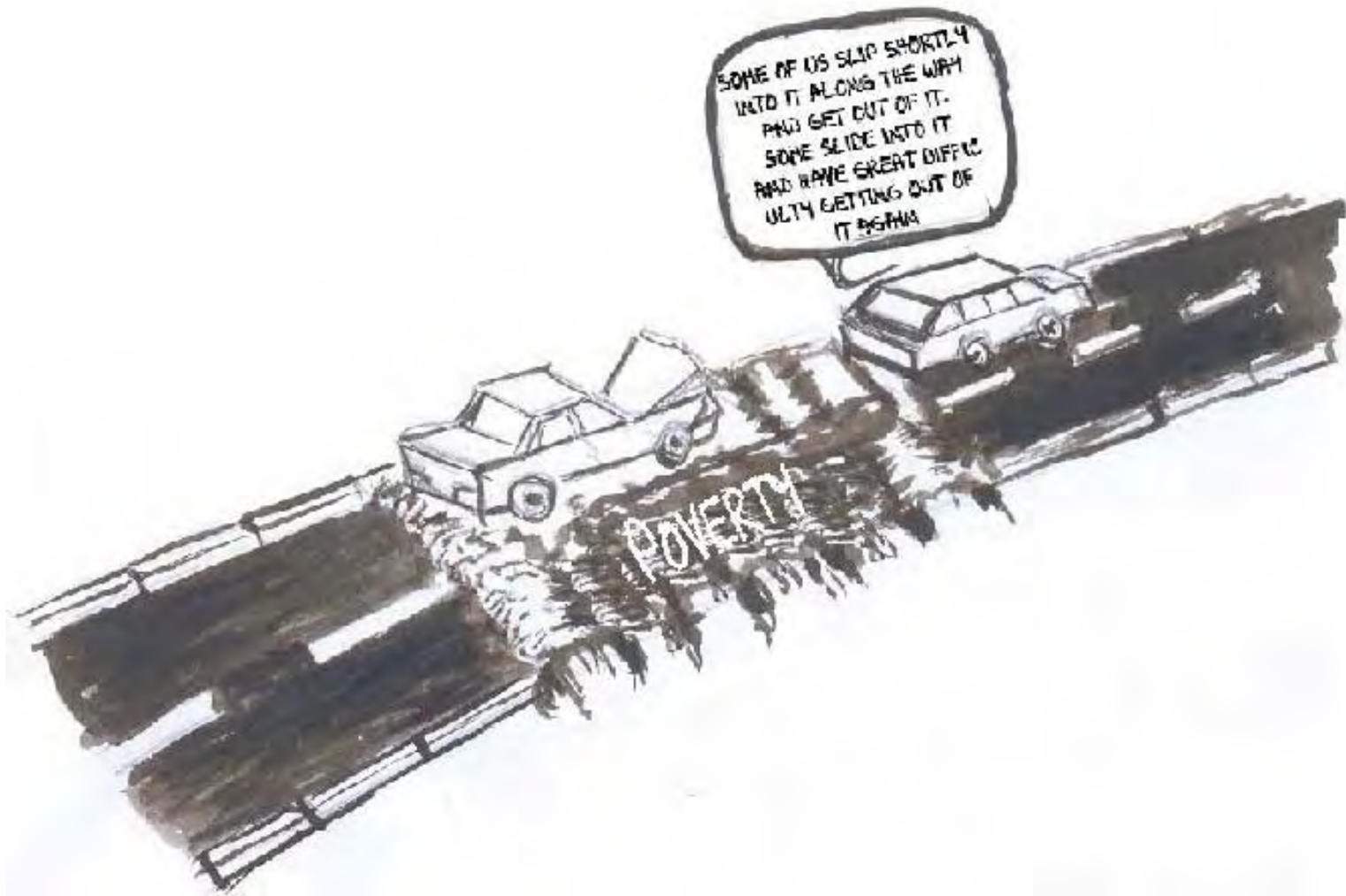
- Woman marry young – the average age is 20 but there were just over 52,000 cases of 10 or 11 year olds being married
- Of all new born babies, only 19% are born in suitable healthcare facilities
- Out of babies born at home, 57% were delivered by female relatives or friends and 41% were delivered by a traditional birthing attendant
- 31% of married women know or have heard about methods to avoid pregnancy

The information above tells us that women's health rights are not met. This impacts on their capacity to participate socially, economically or politically. This lack of participation limits the amount that women can add to the economic growth of the country. In order for women and girls to be able to take part in decision making, they need to have their basic health rights met.

## Water and Sanitation

- In all of Afghanistan 31% of households have access to safe drinking water. This is a low percentage. Lack of access to clean and safe drinking water means that people will get sick. If they are sick and unable to work or join in with the social and economic development of the country, the economy will suffer.
- Only 7% of households nationwide have access to clean toilet facilities. Lack of suitable toilets can cause the spread of disease. This is very dangerous in areas where people do not have access to a doctor or for people who can't afford to buy medicines.





#### Summary: Poverty in Afghanistan:

- With nearly half of the population living in poverty, (according to the NRVA 2005) it is an important issue that the Government needs to deal with.
- Poverty in Afghanistan is multi-dimensional. People are poor in the sense that they do not have money to buy what they need, such as enough food, warm clothes or good, safe housing.
- People are also poor in that they do not have enough access to basic things needed for human development. Not everyone gets an education, not all people can see a doctor or nurse when they are sick, and not all people can join in and make decisions about things that affect their lives.

What is needed is a development plan that will take these problems into account. Afghanistan needs a poverty reduction strategy that involves the people who are living in poverty. Poor people experience poverty and know best what it is. They live in poverty everyday – it is their life and they should be involved in decisions that affect their lives.

# 1.3 how can poverty be reduced?

Ensuring that less people live in poverty is a process called poverty reduction.

What are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)?

The MDGs are global targets set by the United Nations (UN) for poverty reduction. They will also help to guide Afghanistan's development. In the next 15 years, Afghanistan wants to meet the MDGs which are to eliminate extreme poverty and hunger. The Afghan Government, international stakeholders and civil society want to see all boys and girls complete primary education and for women to enjoy greater fairness in education, political participation and justice. The goal is also to cut the number of children dying before they reach five years old and to reduce the number of women dying in childbirth.

What is Poverty Reduction?

Poverty reduction is a process which aims to reduce poverty in a community or country. Development strategies focussing on poverty reduction aim to target the poor directly, as opposed to developing a country's economy. Poverty can be seen as a barrier to both the social and economic growth of a country and for this reason, poverty reduction is often central to development plans.

To reduce poverty, economic growth is often needed. Let's look at poverty reduction and economic growth on two levels:

- National level: As an economy gets bigger, a country and its people are likely to earn more money. The Government then has more money to spend on services for people, like schools, health clinics and other social benefits and people earn more money.
- Local level: Economic growth within a country means that there will be more opportunities in terms of jobs. People may be able to work, earn money and create a better life for themselves.

Economic growth however, does not always benefit the poorest members of society. Some people have argued that when an economy grows, the benefits (money and wealth) "trickle-down" to the poorest people. Some organisations working in development and poverty reduction disagree with the idea of "trickle-down" and have suggested that economic growth needs to be focussed on the poor. This is known as pro-poor economic growth.

## Economic Growth

### What is Economic Growth?

Economic growth is the increase in the value of the goods and services by an economy. It is measured by looking at the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which shows how much money a country is making. Increases in exports and national employment are used to measure economic growth.

Economic growth is considered necessary for poverty reduction but it needs to be growth that is equal amongst both the rich and the poor. The increase in an economic activity which creates more money needs to be able to last a long time, (that is, sustainable) and it needs to benefit all people equally. For this to occur, the Government needs to include people in their plans and be open and honest about what they want to do. There also needs to be sensible management of big business. At the local level, for economic growth to work, there needs to be equal participation of men, women and those marginalised groups, such as the disabled and small ethnic groups, who are typically not included in planning and decision making.



Consider the post-war construction boom in Afghanistan as an example. The building sector has seen a lot of growth through investments. In urban centres there has been an increase in housing and commercial complexes. This has caused an increase in the number of employment opportunities. Work needs to be done and workers are needed to do it. On the macro level, this boom will add to the GDP of the country. However, the income from this boom might not benefit everyone equally. The construction firm owner, top level management, foreign investors and consultants will make profits and get high salaries. The Afghans working as manual labour will get less. Therefore, high economic growth in a particular sector and in the overall economy will not always translate into equitable pro-poor growth.



Sometimes, when an economy grows, it does not necessarily mean that everyone benefits from the growth. Pro-poor growth tries to make sure that growth is not just about the economy and money. Instead, pro-poor growth places importance on social justice and asks if people are getting a better standard of living as a result of increasing economic gains.

To achieve pro-poor growth the Government, with support from international donors and civil society, needs to adopt policies that enable poor people to access human, physical and financial assets that can increase both the productivity of the poor and their incomes. People living in poverty need to be able to access local level job opportunities.



Economic growth on its own is not enough to make poverty reduction a reality. There also needs to be an increase in the rights that people have. Human rights are things like feeling safe and secure, having enough food, being respected and being able to get medical help when needed. Powerlessness, injustice and exclusion from decision making all cause poverty and make poverty reduction difficult to achieve. For poverty reduction to be a reality, poor people need to be able to exercise their human rights and to have access to the institutions that affect their lives. Participation is very important and without it, poverty reduction will not happen.

### What policy actions are needed in Afghanistan to make Poverty Reduction happen?

#### 1. Pro-poor economic growth

There needs to be an economically safe environment that will attract private investment. The economy may not grow until big businesses think it is safe to invest in Afghanistan. The Government need to make and enforce laws that will make it possible for the economy to grow. Rural poverty is a big problem in Afghanistan and therefore the focus should be on pro-poor rural growth.

#### 2. Empowerment, Rights and Pro-poor Governance

Poverty can sometimes mean that certain groups are not included in making decisions. In order to increase the power and influence that both men and women have in terms of participation in decision making, there needs to be democratic governance with popular participation in policy making. This means that people should be encouraged by the Government to join in with decision making and not feel left out or scared to join in.

#### 3. Human Security

This is about making sure that people are protected from economic and social problems. Food shortages, sickness, old age, natural disasters, unemployment, domestic violence and accidents at work are examples of the types of shocks that need to be included in social protection programmes.

#### 4. Gender

Gender inequality is linked to poverty. Women's access to employment, credit and productive resources is essential as it will help them to make a living. This will benefit women, men, and most importantly, children. Poverty reduction strategies must address differences between men and women in their access to basic services, economic opportunities and assets such as land and finance, political participation, knowledge and technology.

### Summary: Poverty Reduction

- Poverty reduction is a process which aims to reduce the number of people living in poverty
- Economic growth is seen as a way to create more money. This money can then be used to improve the quality of life for people living in poverty
- Economic growth does not always benefit the poorest, most in-need members of a society
- Pro-poor growth is seen as a way of encouraging development plans to benefit the poorest people



# 1.4 who is involved in development and poverty reduction?

There are many people and groups involved in development and the poverty reduction process. This section gives an overview of the main groups involved.

The main groups involved in development can be broken down into three categories:

- Public Sector
- Private Sector
- Civil Society

## The Public Sector

The public sector is made up of groups and organisations that belong to the government. These state institutions are responsible for allocating the national budget – the money raised from taxes and other sources of income – to be spent on all the things necessary to ensure the country can function and grow. State institutions are also responsible for organising the delivery of services the budget is spent on, such as healthcare and education, to meet the needs of the people. State institutions do not always deliver these services themselves, but may give the job of service delivery to a private or civil society organisation.

An example of a public sector institution is the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). MRRD is involved in the planning and implementation of many projects and programmes concerning rural development. An example of a MRRD initiative is the National Solidarity Programme (NSP). This programme, with the support of civil society organisations, encourages local communities to be involved in development. MRRD works with both the private sector and civil society.

The public sector plays a very important role in poverty reduction. Firstly, the public sector provides essential services to people to make sure their needs are met. People need to be able to access the services that will give them a good quality of life.

Secondly, the public sector can help to promote economic growth. In order for this to happen, the public sector must work well. There needs to be good organisation of information and decision making. Consider the issue of land registration as an example. If the Government ensures and updates records about land ownership and registration then land ownership will become more

efficient and more people will be involved in farming and related activities. If the Government deals quickly with land ownership disputes it means that people can use the land for farming. Farming businesses will grow and contribute to economic growth and poverty reduction.

### The Legislature

The Legislature consists of the institutions that make the laws in the country and are part of the public sector. In Afghanistan this is the executive – the Government – and the legislature - which consists of the Lower House (Wolesi Jirga) and the Upper House (Meshrano Jirga). The Legislature votes on decisions made by the executive.

The members of the Lower House are elected by the people to represent their interests. They have an important role to play in ensuring that the decisions and plans of the Government meet the needs of the people. The Upper House consists of 102 members – 34 elected by District Councils, 34 elected by Provincial Councils and 34 by the President. The Upper House is intended to play an oversight, advisory role to the executive. The legislature has a role to play as a watchdog over Government to ensure it is accountable to the people it is meant to serve.

The legislature has to approve national budgets and legislation intended to reduce poverty. In this way, the members of the Legislature play a vital role in ensuring that the budgets and legislation meet the needs of the people. They also play a key role in ensuring that the people understand what they can expect from the Governments efforts to reduce poverty, as well as ensuring that the legislation passed is actually implemented.

Members of the Lower House of the Legislature are elected by people who choose them because they believe they will represent their interests. So when acting as watchdogs over Government legislation, the legislature must reflect and support the interests of the people who voted for them to be there. While this is the function of the legislature, there is sometimes a tension between representing one particular constituency and the broader needs of the population.

Members of the legislature also have an important oversight role to play in monitoring progress towards the targets set out in the ANDS. They can represent their constituencies' perspectives on the way work is proceeding towards those goals. Regular consultations with communities and organised ways through which to engage with government on the ANDS will be necessary to strengthen the role of the legislature.





### The Private Sector

The private sector is all the institutions, businesses and activities that are not regulated by the state/Government. Most private sector organisations are businesses and therefore normally work to make a profit or financial gain. An example of a private sector organisation in Afghanistan is a private media organisation. State owned media are part of the public sector.

The private sector plays a very important role in poverty reduction. In most countries the private sector provides most of the employment. As an economy gets bigger, there will be more investment by private sector companies. The more investment there is, the more jobs that will be created. Unemployment is often associated with poverty. If people find work, they are more able to get access to the things they need for a better life.

Private sector companies can also be paid to do the work of the public sector. Take healthcare as an example. Sometimes the Government is unable to provide all aspects of healthcare and so the private sector may step in, on request or voluntarily, to provide a certain service. However, because the private sector works to make a profit, it will charge money for the services it provides.

It is often said that the private sector can be more efficient than the public sector. Some think this is due to the fact that the private sector has a financial incentive – this means the more work they do and the more efficiently they do it, the more money they can make.

When a private sector organisation is asked by the Government to provide a particular service it is very important that the desire to make money does not reduce the quality of services. The Government pays the private sector to deliver some of its services and it is very important that the quality remains high.

## Civil Society

Civil Society Organisations or CSOs are the institutions and organisations that are not part of the Government or part of the private sector.

### Who or what is civil society?

These are groups or organisations that work for society to achieve social and political goals. They are independent from Government and the state and operate and often fund themselves. Also Civil Society Organisations (CSO) are not commercial. This means they don't work for material or financial profit. CSOs include groups such as charities, community groups, cooperatives, cultural groups, media groups, non-Governmental organisations (NGOs), policy institutions, religious associations and trade unions.

Based on research conducted by the Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSF), a short list of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Afghanistan would include:

- Shuras, jirgas, and community councils are all part of traditional civil society.
- Religious figures, groups and networks such as ulamas are seen as civil society actors due to their influence in society.
- Tribal and qown structures that function along the goals and principles of a vibrant civil society.
- Market associations, including sawdagars (tejaar) are active partners in civil society.
- Voluntary and professional associations, NGOs, interest groups (e.g. trade unions), and social and cultural associations.
- Advocacy and rights based groups including the media.

Source: Adapted from ACSF, Understanding Civil Society in Afghanistan.

Civil society plays an important role in poverty reduction. They are often directly involved in providing services to people. Many non-Governmental organisations (NGOs) work with poor individuals or communities whose needs are not being met by the state or with those who can't afford to access private sector services.

Civil society also works directly with poor people to ensure their 'voices' are heard by those in power, like the central Government. CSOs can help to organise people, helping groups and communities to be able to access the services that they need.

## 2.1 what is a poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) & who is involved?

To reduce poverty as has been described so far, the Government of Afghanistan has adopted a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach. This will take the form of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), and will outline the government's plans to reduce poverty, including what the national budget will be spent on. The ANDS is included in the national budget, and is therefore subject to the same constitutional laws. For example, the Government prioritised the finalisation of the health, education and transport and roads elements of the ANDS so as to include their costings in the national budget. Before looking at what the ANDS is going to do to reduce poverty, let's first discuss what the PRSP process is about.

### What is a PRSP?

To be able to get money for aid and debt relief, the Afghan Government, together with international money lenders, civil society and other stakeholders, must go through a process to develop a strategy for development and poverty reduction. The result of this process is the PRSP, which in Afghanistan will be called the ANDS.

In order to qualify to get money the PRSP (or ANDS) must do the following:

- The Government must describe who they have spoken with to get the information. Ideally, they are supposed to consult people who are normally excluded
- The PRSP must research poverty very well. The idea is that if poverty reduction is to work, there has to be an in-depth understanding of what poverty is and how it is experienced by those living in poverty
- Budgets are really important in the PRSP process. The international banks who are lending the money want to see really clear plans of how the Government plans to spend the money and how this spending will be monitored
- Within the PRSP, there must be really clear plans and policies for action. The ANDS must outline what they want to do and how they are going to do it

### Where is the money coming from?

Afghanistan is very poor and once the PRSP is approved it will be allowed to be part of a group known as the HIPC – Heavily Indebted Poor Countries. As a member of this group, it can get money from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) - under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) - and other donors.

#### The World Bank and IMF

The World Bank and the IMF are international banking institutions based in Washington in the United States of America. Together, they are known as the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) after the town in which they were started in 1944. They formed to offer aid to Europe after the Second World War. The World Bank is made up of 184 member countries and is the world's largest development institution. The World Bank borrows money from international markets at low rates and lends the money to poorer countries that would normally face higher rates. The IMF works to ensure that the global economy remains healthy and that there are no economic crises caused by unstable exchange rates.

Started by the World Bank and IMF in 1996 and 1999 respectively, the HIPC Initiative and the PRGF provide debt relief and low rate loans to poor countries. The financial help provided comes with requests. This means that when a country accepts debt relief and loans, there are certain steps they have to take. Normally, the receiving country has to meet a range of economic targets. Although the debt relief aspect of the HIPC initiative and PRGF are welcome, the attached conditions are not. Criticisms include:

- Very few countries meet the requirements to be included in the initiative
- Sometimes, the relief provided is not enough
- The projects that are invested in are sometimes poorly designed and have low stakeholder participation
- Some requested economic changes can increase poverty, particularly where economic growth is not pro-poor
- Debt relief doesn't provide enough money to reduce poverty

Before moving to explore the principles of the PRSP approach, let's explore the history of this development intervention.

#### Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) – The PRSP Forerunner

In the 1970s, developing countries were experiencing severe debt problems so the World Bank



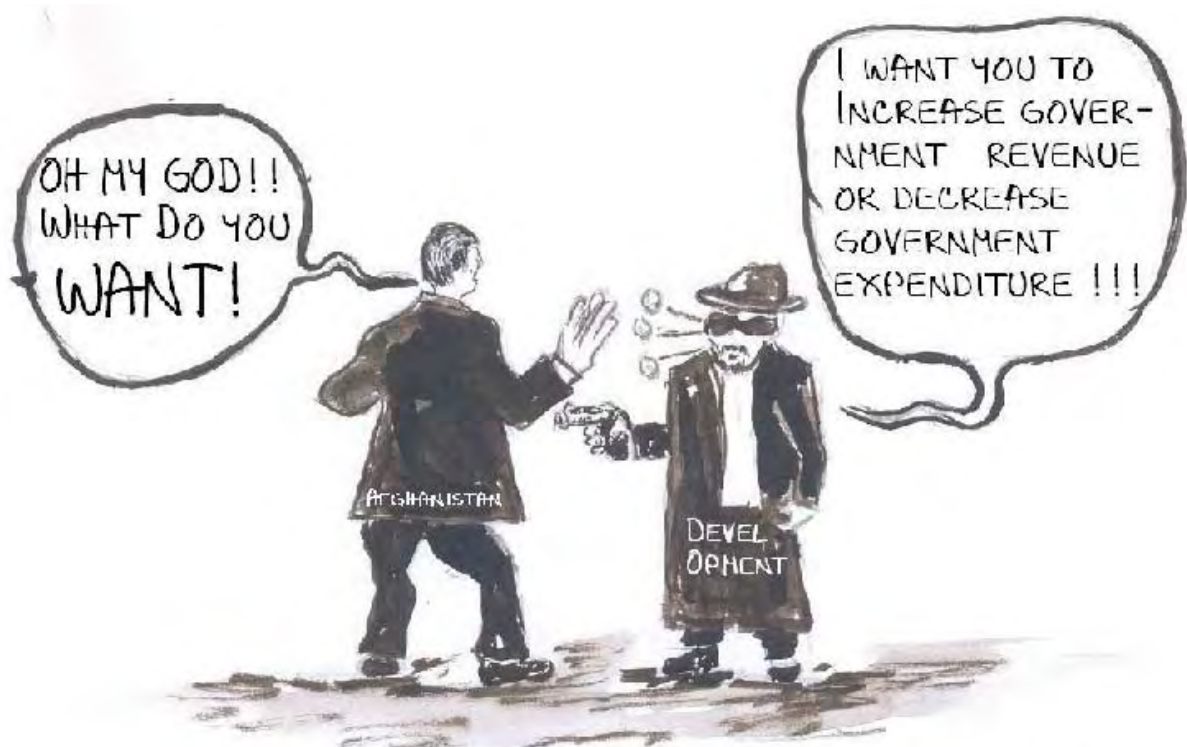
and IMF intervened to try and help. They agreed to offer loans to developing countries which would help to stabilise the economies of the countries in debt. In exchange for these loans, the IMF and World Bank insisted on certain things in return. They wanted borrowing Governments to adopt policies of structural reform in the public sector – this meant Governments were asked to reduce the amount of money spent on public services and increase the importance of the private sector. Countries were asked to make changes in their social and economic policies which the World Bank and IMF believed would make it easier for them to get out of debt relief and poverty and secure longer term economic development.

Negotiations of SAPs were conducted in private, written by international experts in English, involved no civil society organisations in their discussions and the final documents were not made available to the public or the media.

#### Criticisms of SAPs

- Cuts in public spending resulted in closures of schools and clinics
- Previously free services were privatised and therefore people had to pay to receive certain services
- Despite focussing on macro-economics, SAPs are charged with doing little to improve developing country economies.

Some people think that the international banks have changed. Before, when they were involved with SAPs, some people said they had too much influence and that not all stakeholders were involved. Vulnerable countries felt manipulated and that they had little ownership or input into



the strategies which were supposedly going to reduce poverty.

The PRSP approach has tried to address the problems explained above by using the following guidelines:

COUNTRY DRIVEN – the development strategy is to be owned by the Government and based on wide participation from all members of society

RESULTS ORIENTATED – this means that the development strategy will focus on outcomes, especially those that benefit the poor

COMPREHENSIVE – the PRSP will have a wide understanding of the different types of poverty experienced by different types of people

PARTNERSHIP ORIENTATED – organisations and institutions involved in the process (meaning Government, national and international CSOs and external donors) will be consulted throughout the process

LONG TERM PERSPECTIVES – within the PRSP approach, poverty reduction is seen in the long term

PRSPs are a step forward. Although the PRSP process has improved greatly from the SAP of the past, there are still challenges. As already mentioned, the PRSP should be country driven, based on a participatory process, comprehensive in scope and should be results orientated. There are going to be challenges in making sure that this happens in Afghanistan. By discussing these challenges now, it will allow all individuals and organisations involved in the implementation of the PRSP to be aware of what the challenges are and how we can overcome them.

Key Challenges to the PRSP:

- Will the Government show enough ownership of the PRSP or encourage civil society involvement?
- Will the Government be able to meet the development and poverty reduction content of the PRSP?
- Does civil society have enough capacity to engage with the Government?
- Is there enough poverty data to be able to know what the real situation is?

PRSPs in Theory

The new PRSP format has tried to deal with some of the previous criticisms. National ownership of the PRSP is seen as one of the most important aspects of development poverty reduction strategies. Consultation with civil society is also now very important. Including the 'voices of

the poor' in plans to reduce poverty may seem obvious but is only now being recognised and implemented. PRSPs also encourage the Government to use income from growth for more poverty targeted spending on services such as health and education.

#### PRSPs in reality

PRSPs are supposed to give poor countries ownership of their poverty reduction strategies. At the same time however, the World Bank and IMF encourage the same types of macro-economic policies similar to those in SAPs. These policies deal with macro-economic growth and do not focus on poor people or their perspectives of poverty. There have been limitations with PRSPs in different countries and these could serve as lessons to Afghanistan:

- Weak Governments – PRSPs want national ownership but some Governments are not strong enough, or do not have the capacity, to own the poverty reduction strategies. This could be due to corruption, instability, lack of practice or a lack of political will.
- Pull of free-market economics – PRSPs advocate for poverty reduction through economic growth but few developing countries have the ability to regulate the export market or reform the state in ways that are fairer for poor people.
- Business as usual – some people who are critical of PRSPs suggest that they are just the same as SAPs. The only difference, they argue, is that the ideas of participation and ownership hide the fact that the World Bank and IMF are very much in control.

#### Civil Society Organisations and the PRSP

The PRSP process is one that is based on country ownership and is driven by participation and consultation. As a result of these requirements, civil society is now one of the important development and poverty reduction actors.

Civil society organisations are now more engaged than ever and have been able to move beyond service delivery roles. This means that they contribute to poverty reduction policy, instead of just being told what to do by the Government. It also gives civil society organisations the chance to challenge the Government when they fail to deliver what has been promised.

Under the PRSP process, it is one of the first real opportunities that the Government has had to talk with civil society organisations. The PRSP demands real consultation with people living in poverty and civil society organisations are the organisations who can really speak with and for poor people. CSOs are in the unique position to be able to discuss with and inform other stakeholders about what the real development and poverty issues are.

What does civil society want to do?

- Make poor people's interests central to economic plans. The idea is to challenge the assumption that economic benefits will eventually trickle-down to benefit poor people
- Make sure economic changes help poor people get access to basic public services such as health and education
- Ensure that larger companies pay their workers fair wages, ensure economic opportunities for local communities and make sure that profits stay within the country
- Monitor Government, donor and international commitment to pro-poor policies
- Provide services which help to ensure that basic human rights are being met

### Opportunities

In Afghanistan the PRSP process has made it possible for the Government to engage with civil society. This is the first time that this has really happened and is an important opportunity for civil society organisations to get poor people's views and needs right to the centre of policy debates and decision making.

The ANDS provides an opportunity for the government, the legislature and the public to have a conversation about what the money of the country should be spent on to reduce poverty and stimulate growth. As such, it also represents an opportunity for the legislature to ask the government to explain and justify the plans for spending of the national budget.

It is also an opportunity for MPs, civil society and community representatives to forge coalitions in support of poverty reduction. For example Albania's 2003 budget allocation for the education sector was increased as a result of discussions between civil society actors and parliament, which were followed by successful lobbying by parliament.

### Challenges

Some people involved in PRSPs and civil society argue that although the Government are seeking consultation, they may in fact only be saying so to get funds released from the IMF and World Bank. It is too early in the process to judge how sincere the Government's request for participation and consultation are. Also, there is little attention given to the capacity of CSOs. Are they able to participate? Or do these restrictions on participation come from within civil society?

## The Role of the Legislature in Poverty Reduction and the PRSP

The PRSP is a strategy proposed by the Government to reduce poverty. As with any plan of the government to spend public funds it is a proposal that should be approved by the legislature before it is finalised and before implementation starts. Therefore the legislature, particularly the Lower House, has a very important role to play. They must ensure that the strategy to reduce poverty is realistic and based on the needs of the people. They must ensure that the needs of all Afghans, not only the ones who voted for them, are reflected in the PRSP. Members of the legislature also have a responsibility to help ensure the plan gets approved so that it can be finalised and the work to reduce poverty can be started. Members of the legislature can also play an important role in ensuring that the work to reduce poverty and achieve the goals of the PRSP is effective.

The Legislature can also help fulfil some of the requirements of the PRSP process. Because the Legislature is often the most representative aspect of a Government, the legislature can also help fulfil the participatory, country led and owned requirements of the PRSP.

In addition, there are four main ways that parliamentarians can engage in the PRSP process:

1. **Poverty diagnosis:** members of the legislature can ensure that the analysis of poverty that the PRSP is based on, reflects the needs of the people, particularly the poor. They can ensure they have carried out activities to provide evidence that they know what their constituents need (see below). They can ask Government to share the analysis of poverty and suggest changes if necessary. They can become familiar with the existing poverty information, for example, the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) 2005 and the Afghanistan Pilot Participatory Poverty Assessment (APPPA).
2. **PRSP development:** as well as contributing to country ownership of the PRSP, the legislature can also

### Parliamentarian activities that may reveal poverty-related issues

- Tracking and categorizing citizen complaints.
- Recording access and security issues raised by constituents during office hours.
- Meeting with grass-roots leaders to discuss communal or village issues.
- Identifying reoccurring problems when communicating with local representatives of organizations, unions, or business.
- Observing district differences in infrastructure or access.
- Keeping regular communication with local or regional CSOs that have issue-specific expertise.



provide sectoral inputs. For example Parliamentary Committees may be approached for issue specific knowledge or experience; individual Parliamentarians may be tasked with hosting public meetings to discuss policy with citizens (especially poorer citizens); and parliamentary leadership could be invited to hold public, plenary debates on the draft PRSP.

3. Implementation of PRSP: the legislature can support the implementation of the PRSP through a number of ways. Most importantly, through being familiar with the budgeting process, they can monitor how money is being allocated and spent on reducing poverty. Secondly, ensuring that legislation exists to support the delivery of the strategy is also important. For example, if the strategy is based on spending decisions being made at a sub-national level, then decision making authority at the appropriate level needs to be legislated for. At the local level, Parliament can also play an important role in helping the public understand the detail of the PRSP and what they can expect (and not expect) from it.
4. Monitoring of PRSP implementation and evaluation of PRSP priorities: many of the processes and activities of the legislature's involvement in the preparation of the PRSP can also help in the monitoring and evaluation of PRSP delivery – for example constituency thoughts on service delivery can help inform evaluation of PRSP progress. Additionally, Parliamentary Committee Meetings on PRSP activities and targets (particularly around budget tracking), the review of annual PRSP progress reports and the integration of Parliamentary Committees into the formal PRSP monitoring and evaluation plan can all provide the legislature with evidence and documentation to help them in making the implementation of the PRSP a strong process.



## 2.2 what is the afghan PRSP/ANDS?

What is a National Development Strategy?

A National Development Strategy is a document which describes what a Government wants to achieve and how they plan to do it. The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) is a five year outline of the Government's development plan. Included in this framework are the social, economic, governance and security goals that the Government wants to achieve.

ANDS: Policy areas, Pillars, and Crosscutting issues

Three Main Policy Areas

To achieve pro-poor growth whilst eliminating criminal activities, the Government have decided to invest heavily in these three policy areas. Under these main areas there are 8 pillars with a number of sector strategies falling under each pillar.

Policy Area 1: Security

Security is to be provided by the Government with direct support from the international community. The Government aims to have lawful, exclusive control on law enforcement. The goal is to provide a secure environment in which all Afghans can fulfil their rights, and social and economic development can flourish. Under this policy area there is one pillar and that too is called security.

Policy Area 2: Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights

The Government's goal is to improve governance by focussing on strengthening Government institutions at central and sub-national levels. Expected outcomes are improvements in the delivery of services and protection of the rights of all Afghans. Central to the improvement of governance is the reform of the judicial system. This includes ensuring that all Afghans can access the formal justice system and also judicial supervision of traditional, informal dispute resolution mechanisms. In addition, the Government aims to strengthen human rights for all and to ensure there are means of redressing violations. Under this policy area there is also one pillar. It is called Governance.

### Policy Area 3: Economic and Social Development

The goal in this policy area is to reduce poverty through private sector led economic growth. To ensure that the poor benefit from the economic growth, the Government is aiming for high growth rates (9% per year of real growth of legal GDP). At the same time, the Government aims to gradually eliminate the criminal economy by targeting corrupt officials and traffickers and by helping the poor to make legal incomes for themselves. Under this area there are six pillars:

1. Infrastructure and natural resources
2. Education and culture
3. Health and nutrition
4. Agriculture and rural development
5. Social protection
6. Economic governance and private sector development

### Crosscutting Issues

Cross-cutting issues are issues that effect all parts of the ANDS. They are linked to all policy areas and pillars.

#### Crosscutting Issue 1: Gender Equity

The goal within this issue is to achieve gender equality for women. This includes eliminating discrimination against women and increasing their ability to participate in society.

#### Crosscutting Issue 2: Counter Narcotics

The long term aim in this issue is to reduce the amount of poppy grown. This also includes reducing the production and consumption of drugs. Counter narcotics is also about illicit activities associated with drug production, such as trafficking. The goal is to completely stop narcotic growth in Afghanistan. When this is achieved, there will be more space for pro-poor, private sector led economic growth.

#### Crosscutting Issue 3: Regional Cooperation

The Government want to see regional prosperity and stability. To ensure this happens, they will promote regional cooperation. The long term aim is to re-establish Afghanistan as a land bridge between Central and South Asia allowing it to benefit from increased trade and export opportunities.

#### Crosscutting Issue 4: Anti-Corruption

The aim in this issue is two-fold. The Government not only wants to rid corruption from the private and public sectors, they also want to create an environment that is attractive to potential investors. This means there has to be improvement in the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the Government.

### Crosscutting Issue 5: Environment

The Government wants to see sustainable development of natural resources with maximum community participation. In addition, the Government wants private sector involvement which will promote economic growth that is supportive of peace building and security.

### Crosscutting Issue 6: Capacity Building

Improving the skills and efficiency of those involved in development is central to the ANDS. At both the central and the provincial level, the Government want to see improved ability and capacity in dealing with poverty reduction and development issues. Capacity building will happen through increased training and a sharing of knowledge between development partners from both the private sector and CSOs.

Pillars (with benchmarks/targets)

#### Pillar 1: Security

The Government will promote security with the support of the International community:

- ARMY – The Government will establish the Afghan National Army (ANA) which will meet the security needs of the country. It will have up to 70,000 people, be professional and represent all ethnic groups of Afghanistan.
- TERRORISM – all illegal armed groups will be disbanded in all provinces throughout Afghanistan.
- POLICE – The Government will fully legalise and formalise the Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan Border Police. Professional, functional and ethically balanced they have up to 62,000 people.
- DRUGS – The Government will have the law enforcement capacity at central and provincial levels to increase the amount of drug seized or destroyed and also get rid of drug making factories.
- BORDER CONTROL – The Government aims to work well with neighbouring countries so that they can share intelligence and reduce the amount of drugs smuggled across Afghanistan's borders.
- LANDMINES – The Government aims for a 70% reduction in the area of land contaminated by mines and unexploded ordinance. They are also aiming for the destruction of all unsafe surplus ammunition.







## Pillar 2: Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights

To ensure the protection of Afghan citizens and to achieve measurable improvements in the delivery of services the Government aims to achieve the following:

- GOVERNMENTAL CUTS – Ministries will be made more effective and able to work to a defined budget to ensure they can continue to operate.
- EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES/REVIEWS - Senior level jobs will be filled in a transparent way and all civil service positions will be subject to performance based reviews. Corruption and favouritism will be removed from appointment procedures.
- ANTI-CORRUPTION – There will be increased arrests and prosecutions of traffickers and corrupt officials.
- JUDICIAL SYSTEM – There will be reform of the justice infrastructure, prisons will have separate women and juvenile facilities and justice institutions will be fully operational at the provincial level.
- GENDER – The Government want to see female participation in all Afghan institutions.
- ELECTORAL PROCESS – There will be changes in the law and effort from the Government to make sure that Afghanistan can hold its own elections which are fair and honest.
- CENSUS – Afghanistan will have a census which will provide accurate details about the population.
- LEGAL FRAMEWORK – People will have access to a fair and working legal system.
- LAND TITLING – A fair system for the settlement of land disputes and registration will be introduced to Afghanistan.
- HUMAN RIGHTS – Human rights monitoring will be carried out by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) with UN and Government support.



### Pillar 3: Infrastructure and Natural Resources

In order to achieve social and economic development the Government will invest in programmes that contribute towards developing infrastructure.

- **NATIONAL ROADS AND ROAD TRANSPORT** – to support private sector and human development the Government will build and maintain the ring road and other roads that connect Afghanistan to neighbouring countries. Need has also been identified for rural access roads which would allow agricultural and rural produce to reach domestic and international markets.
- **AIR TRANSPORT** – investment in this area will enable import/export markets to become more efficient.
- **ENERGY** – cheap and constant electricity has been identified as necessary for industry, irrigation and private sector investment. Until domestic electricity can be generated, transmission lines will be built to allow purchase from neighbouring countries.
- **WATER** – Government estimates that 90% of water is currently wasted because of outdated systems and as a result significant investment will be made in water management systems and irrigation. Access to drinking water and irrigable land will also be expanded.
- **TELECOMMUNICATIONS** – investment in this area is needed and necessary in order to create an enabling environment for domestic commerce and foreign investment.
- **NATURAL RESOURCES AND MINING** – The Government suspects that they will be able to receive direct foreign investment with regards to extraction of iron, copper, coal, hydrocarbons and gems. To develop this sector the Government will have to address regulatory, financial and institutional problems.
- **URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING** – the Government has released urban development plans that will allow heavily populated areas to respond effectively to further expected urban growth.



#### Pillar 4: Education

The Government aims to build the capacities of not only organisations, but also individuals and to do this they will invest in education. By focussing on this area, the Government hope to increase the marketable skills of the economically active population making them more competitive in a global market.

- **PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION** – The Government aims to increase the amount of children in primary and secondary school and also how long they stay for. Central to this is improving the quality of the curriculum and teaching.
- **HIGHER EDUCATION** – The goal here is to develop institutions that are well managed and internationally recognised and that respond to the growth and development needs of Afghanistan.
- **VOCATIONAL SKILLS** – Afghanistan needs an accessible and relevant skills development system which is responsive to the needs of the labour market.
- **CULTURE** – The Government aims to invest in all aspects of culture including the media, sport and the press. The aim is to safeguard and rebuild the country's cultural heritage and to improve access to sport, cultural institutions and to expand freedom and coverage of the press.



## Pillar 5: Health

To improve the chances of economic growth in the nation, the Government also plans to make significant investments in health.

- **BASIC PACKAGE OF HEALTH SERVICES (BPHS)** – The Government aims to expand the basic package of primary health care delivery. In addition, the aim is to not only improve access, but also make it fairer.
- **HOSPITALS** – The aim is to improve and extend the essential package of hospital services, and more generally to improve the quality of care at hospital level.
- **DISEASES** – The Government have identified the need for a national disease control programme. The aim is to achieve greater control of TB, malaria, HIV/AIDS, eye diseases, leprosy and parasitic infections.
- **PERSONNEL** – To improve selection, appointment and management of trained health professionals, the Government will initiate a health sector human resource management programme.

## Pillar 6: Agriculture and Rural Development

So far there has been little discussion of how the Government hopes to achieve social and economic development. The main source of growth will be high-value agriculture, pastoralism, agro-processing and rural industries and these all fall under the agriculture and rural development sector.

- **AGRICULTURE** – programmes in this area will bring together social and economic development based on legal farming and promoting sustainable use of natural resources.
- **RURAL PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE** – investments in this area will improve access to water for farming and basic services and allow for better access to markets where people can sell their goods and buy supplies.
- **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT** – The Government's aim is to develop, in a participatory manner, an inclusive society. At the village level, this means promoting fair and accessible community based planning and decision making.
- **RURAL FINANCE** – The Government aims to promote and create access to credit for businesses through microfinance and rural credit schemes.
- **RURAL ENTERPRISE** – The focus in this area is to encourage the rural economy to engage in farm and non farm private sector activities. It is hoped that the legal productive potential of rural areas will be released through this investment.

## Pillar 7: Social Protection

This is a wide sector that aims to create an inclusive, tolerant and economically active society.

- **DISASTERS** – Within this sector the Government aims to develop a humanitarian and disaster response system that is capable of dealing with both natural and man-made emergencies. The goal is to be responsive to both slow and quick onset events in all parts of the country.
- **VULNERABLE** – Special focus will be on those who are especially vulnerable. The attention will be on

chronically poor women.

- UNEMPLOYMENT – The Government wants to enhance the productivity of youth and the unemployed.
- DISABILITY – The Government aims to create a barrier-free society where all people have the same opportunities.
- REFUGEES AND IDPs – Within this area the Government is seeking to support the return of all refugees and to ensure their legal rights are established. In the long term, the Government wants to negotiate agreements with neighbouring countries with regards to Afghans who remain working in other countries. The Government will continue to support IDPs.

## Pillar 8: Economic Governance and Private Sector Development

The Government wants to encourage businesses and economic growth in the private sector. To achieve this, the Government will work in the following areas:

- MEDIUM TERM FISCAL FRAMEWORK (MTFF) – The Government aims to plan the way they spend their money over the next 5 years, based on the expected amount coming in and the expected amount they are going to spend.
- TAXES – improve tax collection
- INCOME AND SPENDING – The Government wants to make spending more efficient.
- IMPROVE THE INVESTMENT CLIMATE – The Government wants to attract business and foreign investment to improve their domestic and international economy.
- TRADE – The Government wants to do everything possible to make trade happen both inside Afghanistan, with neighbouring countries and in international markets.
- FINANCIAL SERVICES – The aim is to ensure the smooth running of all institutions dealing with money, goods, property and business. This includes organisations that deal with domestic and international money markets.

## The Consultation process and the ANDS

To qualify as a PRSP, the ANDS had to consult with people. The ANDS set up a number of consultations to ensure that there was input into the ANDS from both civil society and the wider Afghan public.

The process of the ANDS and consultations started by building on the Interim Afghanistan National Development strategy (IANDS) and the Afghanistan Compact.

### What is the IANDS?

The IANDS was formed over 12 months of intensive consultations within Government and with wider stakeholders. The process was led by the Presidential Oversight Committee. Consultations started in early 2005 and included discussion on how Afghanistan could meet its MDGs. The Presidential Oversight

Committee met weekly to discuss the process and ensure it moved forward in terms of developing sector pillars. In mid-June, 2005, there was a presentation of the proposed IANDS structure. Donors, NGOs, the private sector and CSOs were invited to comment. These inputs were discussed and the IANDS was redrafted.

After this consultation period, the IANDS was presented at a conference in London in 2006. Out of the 'Building on Success – The London Conference on Afghanistan' came a document called 'The Afghanistan Compact'. The paper details an agreement between the Afghan Government and the international community. Included in this were a series of targets and benchmarks which are detailed under individual sectors. The international community and the Afghanistan Government decided that foreign countries and donors would support the development goals of the Government. The Afghan Government decided to take responsibility of how the national development goals would be met.

#### Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board

To ensure that the goals of the Compact are met, there needs to be strong political, security and financial commitment from all people involved. To make sure that there is coordination in the implementation of the final ANDS, the Afghan Government and the international community have set up the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB). The JCMB holds meetings as and when needed to review how the Compact is being put in place. The JCMB will think about what other people's ideas are and how these can be put into the Compact – ideas from UN agencies, donors, international banks, security forces, NGOs and other civil society representatives.

#### Continuing Consultations

In January 2007 the Foundation for Culture and Civil Society (FCCS) ran a small scale poverty assesment for the ANDS. They worked in 8 provinces gathering information to identify the needs of the Afghan people.

In the summer months of 2007 a large series of public consultations were carried out in each province by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) on behalf of the ANDS. These meetings were called Sub-national Consultations (SNCs). They were 5-10 days long and included assessments of people's needs and included ranking exercises to prioritise what types of projects could potentially meet the needs raised.

In the later half of 2007 ACBAR carried out a medium scale poverty assessment. The Afghanistan Pilot Participatory Poverty Assessment (APPPA) aimed to identify the 'voices' of the Afghan public. It wanted to know what people thought about the causes and effects of poverty in Afghanistan. The next chapter looks in detail at the APPPA.



## 2.3 what is the APPPA?

Participation and consultation are very important in making the ANDS a success. If the Government doesn't know what poor people think about their own lives how it will ever be possible for them to introduce policies that will actually reduce poverty? The Afghanistan Pilot Participatory Poverty Assessment (APPPA) is a process that has tried to collect and include some of the 'voices of the poor' in the ANDS.

What is a Participatory Poverty Assessment?

A Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) is a process which tries to document poor people's views for inclusion in Government policies, in this case the PRSP/ANDS. The aim of a PPA is to improve the quality of actions aimed at poverty reduction.

PPAs:

- Increase the understanding of poverty as poor people see it
- Involve civil society organisations (CSOs) in making of development strategies
- Contribute to the public consultation component of the National Development Strategy

What is the APPPA?

The Government of Afghanistan requested support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to help them do a PPA. APPPA is an 12 month project that, through involvement with civil society, has been able to collect the 'voices of the poor' to be included in the up-coming ANDS. All of the data or ideas collected will help to make poverty reduction policies more focussed towards poor people. The APPPA will provide information to help the ANDS reflect the reality of people's ideas on what poverty is and how it affects their lives.

The aim of APPPA was to provide the ANDS with poverty information from 12 weeks of research in 8 field sites. This will help the Government include the 'voices of the poor' - their perspectives and their priorities to reduce poverty - into the ANDS.

The APPPA used a range of communication tools to help achieve these objectives. Video and photographs were taken by poor people to communicate the issues they identified in the research. Community meetings were held with decision makers at provincial and national levels and radio and television programmes were made to share with people the idea of being involved in the decision making process.

### APPPA and the Poor

The APPPA aims to ensure that the 'voice of the poor' will be heard. This will help the poor by giving government the information it needs to make decisions that will help all poor people in Afghanistan.

The final APPPA report will outline the findings from the Assessment. It can be used by all to judge the extent to which the ANDS document will meet the needs of the people. Those who wish to influence the content of the ANDS can use the APPPA report as evidence of what people say they need.

### APPPA & ANDS

Some people think that the ANDS is just a piece of paper and that it means nothing in the real world. Whatever people think about it, it is important to realise that the ANDS is the way in which Afghanistan will plan its way to address economic growth, poverty reduction, good governance and security. This means that it is really important to make sure that how the poor feel about the causes and effects of their poverty are included. The APPPA can contribute to ANDS plans and spending and try to ensure spending is pro-poor.



## APPPA and Civil Society

PRSPs are intended to be based on public consultation and civil society engagement. The APPPA aims to help ANDS listen to the views of civil society. CSOs have a detailed understanding of what makes people poor, how it affects them, and how poverty reduction can become a reality. APPPA's role is very important in that it is acting as a bridge between Government and civil society. In the past Government and civil society have not always been able to communicate and this has contributed to poor people being excluded.

Because PRSP's have such a pro-poor focus, this has created a space for civil society to have their pro-poor views listened to and included. This puts civil society in a good position to be able to ensure that the Government does what it says it is going to do in terms of pro-poor poverty reduction targets and plans.

## APPPA, Participation and Communication

Although a pilot, the APPPA has not only served as a 'voice' for poor people, it has also shown that public participation in policy making (ie making decisions about development) is possible. As more people have been involved in the design of the development plan, it has shown that more participation can make the policies better and help to create a feeling of national ownership.

Communication in the development process is important. If people are to participate in development a communication channel must be made between the Government and the people. Also, the Government must effectively communicate the process, in this case about the ANDS and its formation, to the people. Opportunities for discussion and dialogue must be created between the various people involved in development.



## APPPA Recommendations

The following recommendations came from the APPPA. Ideally, they should be in the ANDS to make sure that it is aimed at reducing poverty.

1. Include the Needs of the Poor. The priorities of poor people should be a main focus of the ANDS. These priorities are:

- Improving health and education services
- Improving the ability to get clean drinking water (and provide hygiene education)
- Improving job opportunities
- Improving roads
- Improving irrigation and water storage
- Improving security and rule of law

2. Improve Markets and Job Opportunities. Opportunities for poor people to get more jobs and have better access to markets to buy and sell goods (at reasonable prices) are recommended. Laws should be passed to prevent people from abusing the poor when they try to start small businesses and get jobs. Also, legal and financial support should be provided for poor people to buy land.

3. Support Small-scale Agriculture. People with small plots of agricultural land should be supported. This means supporting poor people to reclaim old land and get access to more irrigation water. They would also need a range of seeds and be supported to grow a wider selection of foods. Supporting poor people in raising animals is also important.

4. Improve Regional Government and Reduce Corruption. Support must be given to improve Provincial, District and Community-level government organisations. They must be helped to understand how to get money from the government in Kabul to spend in their areas. Also corruption must be reduced in these organisations.

5. Improve Regional Services: The quantity and quality of services in the provinces must be made better. Access to these services for women and girls, including other people, must be improved. Health and Education services must be improved first followed by services that support agriculture and livestock. The government must make sure that poor people do not have to pay bribes to use these services, because they are meant to be free.



6. Make sure that Government has a Pro-poor Budget: It is recommended that the Ministry of Finance and the international community allocating finances in areas (both geographically but also for services) that will help the poor.
7. Take Action to Stop Social Inequality. It is recommended that programmes are put in place that can begin to work with communities to try and work against inequalities between different sexes, tribes and ethnicities in Afghanistan.
8. Prepare for Population Growth. In the long-term plans must be made to counter the quickly increasing population in Afghanistan. These plans should include slowing down population growth but also preparing enough jobs, developing the environment and strengthening government organisations for the pressures to follow.
9. Develop Ways of Helping People who are Vulnerable. A national protection programme should be developed that will help people who either have been struck by a shock to their lives (e.g. conflict or natural disaster) or who are so poor that they really need help to recover. The programme must be throughout all of Afghanistan and be aimed at helping all different types of people including old people, disabled people, widows, orphans and people who have been abused.
10. Work Closer with Communities. The Government and international community must work much harder to work closely with communities. They must be able to make sure that aid and support is going to the poor people in a community. To do this they need to meet with communities to plan projects and work with communities to check the quality of projects while they are taking place.
11. Work with Communities to Protect them from the Effects of Disasters. Physical protection must be built for communities to protect them from floods and earthquakes or to conserve water in times of drought. The quality of these constructions must be checked properly. Also, communities need to know the best ways to respond to disasters and where they can go for help.
12. Create a Greater Variety of Jobs and Find New Ways of Surviving. New types of jobs and opportunities should be created for the poor so that they can find new ways of earning money and supporting their family to have a better life.

#### Priorities

All recommendations are important, but considering the limited finances and time available to work on reducing poverty in Afghanistan it would make sense to first focus on tackling Recommendation 1. To help meet the needs of the poor working towards recommendations 2,4,5 and 9, 10 and 11 is advised.



# 3.1 looking into the future

To be finished in April 2008, the ANDS is a great opportunity for the people of Afghanistan to realise their potential. The ANDS has been worked on by Government, civil society and the international community and has given ordinary people the chance to join in with the planning of the national development strategy. The Government is aware of many 'voices' that have not been heard before and it is up to all stakeholders to ensure that this opportunity is not missed.

The ANDS paves the way for a great opportunity for Afghanistan but it is also an incredibly fragile one. The Government and donors need to make sure that the ANDS reflects the needs of the poor. Civil society must be supported in making sure that the nation's progress is focussed towards the ANDS targets and that the Government is monitored in it's delivery of the ANDS.

By including what poor people think - as priorities for poverty reduction in the ANDS - the government has committed itself to reducing poverty. The people best qualified to judge whether this is happening are the people themselves. They need to be involved in judging whether poverty is being reduced once the work towards the targets in the ANDS has started. They can work with the legislature to ensure that their voice is represented in government.

This can be achieved by increasing the involvement of parliamentarians in the implementation and oversight/monitoring of ANDS. It is important to support MPs in understanding the detail of the ANDS and the roles and responsibilities of the different people involved in poverty reduction and the ANDS.

NGO's and civil society organizations can work with MPs to form a coalition to make the ANDS as good a document as possible. NGO's can help MPs to understand both the needs of the people and the work that NGOs are doing by arranging for MPs to meet community members and representatives – particularly in areas outside of their constituency.

MPs can form pressure groups – for example in the form of a Parliamentary Commission or a joint civil society – MP pressure group. This pressure group can work with government to ensure that progress towards ANDS targets is being met.



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